

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: "Gussie" Ornellas, 84, homemaker

*"The Lady of the Mount Church, yeah, we used to have a big doing over there. Yeah, we used to have, that's the patron saint of the Portuguese and they used to have a novena, they call it for nine days. You used to go pray the rosary in church, and then they used to shoot powder, you know. They used to make this sticks of dynamite . . . and throw seven of them one after another for those nine days before the regular date, the fifteenth of August."*

Born in 1900, "Gussie" (Lopez) Ornellas, Portuguese, has been a life-long resident of Kamanaiki Street in Kalihi Valley, Oahu. The youngest girl among a family of nine sons and three daughters, "Gussie" has spent most of her life as a homemaker, taking care of her younger brothers and her own children.

As a youth, she attended Sacred Hearts Convent School, played with the neighborhood children, and helped her mother with household chores. At the age of twenty-two, she married Frank Ornellas. She later gave birth to three daughters and two sons. Two daughters, however, lost their lives on December 7, 1941, when shrapnel unexpectedly hit their Kalihi Valley home.

Now a grandmother, "Gussie" still participates in community activities and is an active member of Our Lady of the Mount Church.

Tape No. 11-14-1-83

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

"Gussie" Ornellas (GO)

December 29, 1983

Kalihi Valley, Oahu

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. "Gussie" Ornellas at her home in Kalihi Valley, Oahu, on December 29, 1983.

First of all, can you tell me when and where you were born?

GO: Kalihi Uka, Kamanaiki Street, 2641, on 1900.

MK: What were your parents' names?

GO: My father was Manuel Souza Lopez. My mother was Caroline Pedra, that's Pedro. In Portuguese it's Pedra, and in English it's Pedro.

MK: Could you please tell me about your mother's early life in Madeira?

GO: Well, she said when she came down [to Hawaii] she was twelve years old and she had to work real hard. They had to plant their own vegetables and stuff like that. And their house [in Madeira], the floor was made of clay, and they had to wash it every day. They used to wash it. It was nice and clean, just like a floor. That's what she says, and then they had to work real hard.

MK: When they first moved to Ka'u [on the Big Island], what kind of work did her family do in Ka'u?

GO: Well, they had plantations and they used to work in the plantations, in the [sugar]cane field. When they came it seems that they had a contract. They had to work there for the years that they signed up. After the contract was over, then they could make their choice where they wanted to go and live.

MK: Tell me about your father's early life.

GO: Well, that I can't tell you very much because I don't know my father's family. We never got to know my father's family. Now with my mother's family, they came down [to Hawaii]. We got to know my grandfather, my grandmother, my aunties and uncles from my mother's

side. My father's side, we don't know much about him.

But a friend of ours, a friend of my mother's, knew my father. She [GO's mother's friend] was living in Brazil, too. She knew my father and my father's father and mother. So she always used to tell my brother Dean, his name was Domingos, "Oh, my goodness, you look just like your grandfather." At first, you know, we thought which grandfather? He didn't look like my grandfather, my mother's father. She said [to GO's brother], "Your father's father and mother in Brazil, I knew them. Your [paternal] grandfather was fair like you. Your [paternal] grandma was on the dark side. And you look like your grandfather." That's the only conversation that she told us about my father. So I don't know much of my father. But my mother's [family] I know because they lived right here in Kamaikai Street.

MK: Can you tell me how your father and mother met?

GO: Well, that I couldn't tell you very much because they met in Ka'u. My father, when he came, he signed a contract to work in Ka'u, and of course, my [maternal] grandfather had signed to work there, too. So that's how my mother met my father. At that time they never used to talk too much about their past, but that's where they met.

MK: I don't know if you can answer this question, but what stories have you heard about your parents' life in Ka'u after they got married?

GO: Well, not much. They, you know, at that time, I guess, they didn't know too much people around so they just lived a normal, you know, quiet life. My mother had three children then.

MK: How many children did your parents have in all?

GO: Nine boys and three girls.

MK: Where do you fit in, in the family?

GO: Oh, let's see. Manuel; Domingos; Carrie; Mary; twins, John and Tony; and then Joe; and then Joaquin and then it was I. I would be the (ninth). Because, see, after I was born, then was my brother, the one that just passed away this year. Then was my brother, Frank, and then my brother Peter. He was the youngest. When my father died he [Peter] was two-and-a-half years old. So my mother was left with eight boys--my oldest sister had got married when my father passed. There was eight [boys] because one had passed away. She was left with the eight boys and with my other sister and myself.

MK: Gee, large family.

GO: Uh huh [yes]. She say she would never give her children a stepfather. So we struggled, but we got there.

MK: When did your father pass away?

GO: I couldn't tell the year, but I know my younger brother was two-and-a-half years old. Well, let's see, I was ten and I was born 1900, so 1910 he died.

MK: I know that you were born in Kalihi. Can you tell me about when your family moved to Kalihi?

GO: Oh, from Ka'u, no. The only thing I know, three children were born there [in Ka'u] and then my brother Dean was born here. But I don't know his age.

MK: Okay. Would you know the reason why the family moved to Kalihi?

GO: Well, I don't know. After their contract was over, I guess they felt they would come to Honolulu to see how things were. To me that's the way I feel because they never used to talk too much about [it]. But I know, when their contract was over, they were allowed to go wherever they wanted.

MK: Where did you first live in Kalihi?

GO: Well, my mother and all my brothers ahead of me, they all lived up by the orphanage. The orphanage is now on this [makai] side as you go [up] Kalihi Street. So that's where my mother lived and my grandfather. There's a bridge that goes up to the orphanage. My grandfather used to live [near] the bridge.

MK: Oh, that's quite far up in the valley.

GO: Oh, yes! Way up.

MK: What do you remember about that orphanage?

GO: Well, they used to have all, you know, children that had parents [who] didn't want them and stuff like that. The orphanage used to take them, and they used to support them, and they grew up there. We used to go and play up there with the children. The nuns allowed us going, play with the children. It was a nice place. Then, I think, after things going up high and high [in costs], they couldn't afford to support them. So that's how they gave up the orphanage.

MK: I don't know how much you remember about that area, or what you've heard about that area, but can you tell me what you know about the people who lived in that orphanage area?

GO: Well, my husband's grandma, she lived up there. And, the Cambras, from there, they moved and they lived over here. The Cambras and my grandfather lived there. [Later,] he came and lived right next to where I was born. And then my auntie, my mother's brother married this Auntie Seraphina, her name was, and my uncle was Manuel. She lived up there, too, but I'm not too sure. I think she lived a little further up from the cemetery on that other side. And then

there was, well, the Cambras, and my husband's grandma was Perreira. And there was the Coelhos that used to live up there.

MK: I notice that you mentioned a lot of Portuguese names. What other groups, ethnic groups, lived up there way up in the valley?

GO: That's about all I could remember. Well, my auntie used to live up there, too, that's my mother's sister. She used to live up there, too, and from there they moved right down at the corner [near GO's present residence on Kamaikai Street]. You know where you make that turn coming up, was a big house on that side. My mother and my auntie, that's my mother's sister, they all lived there with all their children until my father made the house on Kamaikai Street. So my auntie used to help my mother because my auntie had no children. She used to help my mother take care of all of us.

MK: You know, I was wondering, were there any Chinese or Puerto Ricans living way up here in the valley?

GO: Not at that time, only Chinese. Oh, yes, there was a Hawaiian way up, the Kamas. They had a place way up. It's, oh my, about a mile or more from the orphanage.

MK: What were the Chinese and the Kamas doing for a living way up in the valley?

GO: Well, the Kamas used to raise taro, I think. And I think they used to go out and work. They had boys. The Chinese used to plant bananas and when they was ready, they used to pack it to mail to the Mainland and all of that. That's how they used to make their living.

MK: In those days, how were the roads and living conditions way up there in the valley?

GO: Oh, mud. We had no [paved] roads like this. It was all mud when it rained. Oh, another thing they used to do for a living, too, when they were up in Kalihi was . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

GO: . . . [cutting] guava tress. Bakeries used to use wood to bake when they used to cook their bread, and even restaurants. They had to make it [the wood] so long and they tied it up and they used to take down [to bakeries and restaurants]. They used to have donkeys. They had something in the donkey's saddle and they used to tie [the wood] on the sides of the donkeys. Then they used to walk with the donkeys to deliver the wood. That's how they used to make their extra money, too.

Then the Chinese, of course, was the banana [farmers]. But there was only the Kamas, that I remember, the Hawaiians, that lived way up.

Then was Chinese, and after number of years came Joe Kim, the kim chee [maker]. His father and mother, and one or two children or three. They came to live up there. That's where they used to plant their cabbage and used to make their kim chee. They had everything in 'em. Chopped and everything. They used to make their kim chee.

MK: Gee.

GO: That was lot of years.

MK: And you mentioned that the roads were very, very muddy.

GO: Oh, yeah. Even this morning I was talking to my grandchildren. I was telling them about a cemetery up there, that's where my father was buried. We had to walk from this church. We had to walk. Everybody would go to church and then the hearse wasn't a car, it was [drawn by] horses. And they had this just like a shawl, a black shawl; each horse had one on top of them and had fringe about that long [two inches]. They looked so pretty, the horses all decorated. And we'd walk in the back, walking to the cemetery. When it was mud, well, we'd come home with our shoes all dirty. And was donkeys and horses. It was no cars.

MK: How about, say, for sewage facilities or lights in those days?

GO: Lights. No lights. We had to use kerosene lights. And water, we had to go down to the stream and get. What my father did was: he had two big barrels and he had screen and mosquito net over them, that was for drinking. We'd go down to that river to get [water]. Well, that was for cooking and to water some of the plants 'cause my father was very fond of planting fruit trees. Had peaches and oranges, soursap, so he used to plant that. Once in a while they had to water it.

MK: Gee, and so how did you folks carry the water?

GO: Well, [empty] kerosene oil can, we used to put it on our head. We used to get an old rag and make a doughnut out of it, and put it on our head, and put the can on top of our head. We used to wash the leaves from the guava trees, the shoots, wash it nice and clean, then put on top in the can so that the water, when sometime you'd shake your head, wouldn't wet us up.

MK: Oh. How about for laundry? How was your mother doing laundry at that time?

GO: We used to go and wash down the river. We used to take the clothes, used to go down the river. We used to take a rock, a nice rock, you know, where you can scrub. Not one that was very smooth, had to be a little rough. We used to wash the white clothes first because we used to bleach it on the grass. Then we used to wash the colored clothes, come home, hang up colored clothes, then go back and wash



our white clothes and bring it up.

MK: Gee, sounds like a lot of hard work.

GO: Yeah, well, we had to, we had to do it, otherwise we would have to use our dirty clothes all the time.

MK: You know, I was wondering what kind of work was your father doing while your mother took care of the children.

GO: Oh, he was working for the City and County, cleaning the roads at that time. I don't know if you remember seeing men, you know, cleaning roads. Well, that's what my father did.

MK: What were his wages like?

GO: Dollar and a half [\$1.50] a day.

MK: How was that, was that adequate to meet the family's needs?

GO: Well, as I say, everything was cheaper that time, and they used to plant vegetables, cabbage and carrots and stuff like that, so that would all help.

MK: Can you kind of explain again how cheap the food and things were then, back in those days?

GO: Well, I tell you, I remember the corn beef was fifteen cents for one can, and the vienna sausage, if I'm not mistaken, was five cents. I know twenty-five pounds of flour, we used to get it for ninety cents. My mother used to go to the market, that used to be Mr. Lewers' (?) Metropolitan [Meat] Market. All the ladies from here, they all used to go, you know. Everybody likes to go shopping together and walk down there.

MK: Where was it?

GO: Well, Liberty House is now, you know, on King Street, not on the Fort Street side but further (down) between Bethel and Fort Street, the market was there [50 South King Street].

MK: How did your mother and her friends go all the way down there?

GO: Walk, like how we used to walk to school. They used to walk and they used to come home with this flour bags they used to take. And Mr. Lewers (?), he was Portuguese. He knew them and he used to put in the bags soup bone, pieces of stew meat and the neck bone that had lot of meat. The soup bones they used to salt it up, Hawaiian salt. Salt it all up. The meat that was for stew, they used to take it aside, put little salt on it to eat. They weren't gonna use the whole thing, and they'd preserve it until the next time they wanted to cook. We had those crocks and that's where they used to

salt. Then they used to tie flour bag around tight so, you know, flies couldn't go in and stuff like that. And she [GO's mother] used to bake her own bread.

MK: Can you explain how she used to make sweet bread and other breads during those days?

GO: Yeah, well, we had to make yeast with boiled potatoes. Well, the white bread, we used to grate the potatoes and put the potatoes, some sugar, salt, little bit water, and let it rise. When it was up, we used to get our flour, sugar, and bake our bread, [with] little salt. That's the white bread. And then the sweet bread, well, it was about the same, only we had to add butter and eggs to the sweet bread. That one sometime used to take a little longer to rise. And we used to make those great big loaves. We used to have a board like this, kind goes round, and then there's a long handle or stick. We used to put the bread on top of there and we used [it] to put [bread dough] in the oven.

MK: Can you kind of describe the types of ovens that your mother and her . . .

GO: Well, they were made of bricks and was nice and rounded. It was nice if you would see one now. I think in Maui they still have one because when I was there we saw one. Well, [when] it was time to start the oven, we used to put the wood in, let 'em get good and hot. Then afterwards we had to try the oven. We used to throw some flour in. Well, if it would burn the flour, means it was too hot. But before that, we used to have a big stick with rags, and we used to damp the rags, and we used [it] to go and clean all the oven up, and bring all that coal all to the sides 'cause had a piece of tin like a door, you know. You just put it [open], and we would look at it. Well, if it was ready to go in, we'd put our bread in. Cook for one hour or, maybe twenty minutes or so we'd look at it. If it was little too brown we'd keep on shoving the coal toward the door a little bit more. And if it wasn't, then we'd let it be until the hour, then we take it out.

MK: So those days you didn't buy any bread.

GO: No. We didn't buy no bread. And sweet bread was only on Easter and Christmas. We couldn't afford to make sweet bread often.

MK: Gee, I was wondering since this is the Christmas season, how was Christmas celebrated in those days when you were a young girl?

GO: Well, we used to have the old Portuguese style, to have masquerades. You know, people used to dress up any old way and come with masks. Visit, you know, and sing in Portuguese. Whatever you had, you would offer them. When we were young we were afraid and we used to hide ourselves. Go underneath the bed, we used to hide ourselves. But then after we grew up, well, we enjoyed it. Long time after



that, when the Hawaiians start coming, some of them used to come and serenade on New Year's. Not Christmas, New Year's they'd come around and sing.

But we used to get together. You know, how children get together. You bring this from home, I bring that from home, get together, and we used to make a party. It's how we used to enjoy ourselves. I don't know, children were united, not like now, you know. [Now] everybody, they think of themselves only, not thinking of the others. I guess, too, everybody was poor at that time, so it didn't make much difference, you know. But like now, those that have little bit more money, well, they're a little bit more haolefied, eh.

MK: How about Easter in those days?

GO: Well, Easter, for seven weeks, you know, everybody used to kinda cool down on everything, sacrifice a little bit. Easter, my mother would boil eggs and we used to use the onion peels to color the eggs. Then we used to go hunt for eggs same as the kids do now. But, of course, that was eggs, wasn't candy.

MK: But hunting for eggs back then was a lot of fun. I was wondering, in the area that your family lived, there were many Portuguese and many of you were related . . .

GO: Yeah. Starting from the corner there coming up Kamaikai Street. That was Portuguese. That was the Ferreiras, the two Ferreiras. The father and the son, then there was the Mascotos, there was the Venturas, and then next was my auntie, Fernandez, and then next was my grandfather. His name was Pedro, and then next was my uncle, that was my grandfather's son.

On this side of the street, above [GO's present residence], was my husband's grandmother, this was all her place up this way. She had her son, lived over there, then she used to live over here [across GO's present Kamaikai residence]. One of her sons lived in the corner [house] and then when she passed away, well, they sold part of the land so my nephew bought this house that was right across. He bought the lot and built a home. And the son that had the corner lot, well, his son is living there now. He passed away, so the son is there in the house.

And then [the house of] my husband's grandmother, the one that lived across, from her death, it went to her daughter, her daughter first and then it was left to the grandchildren. So one of the granddaughters still lives there. [Her] brothers and sisters decided, being that she was the one taking care of the father and mother, she should be entitled to the place. So they all agreed, they gave her the place. So it was an old house, then she built a new house.

MK: You know, all the land around this street, is it fee simple?

- GO: They say the Bishop Estate owned all of this.
- MK: So when your family first moved onto Kamaikai Street . . .
- GO: Must have been from the Bishop Estate . . .
- MK: They bought the land . . .
- GO: They bought, yeah, it was bought. They sold it. Like this place here where I'm living, [there] used to be a German. A German man owned this place and we were living on the lower side. Then he decided that he wanted to go back to Germany because he was getting real old. He said he wanted to sell, so then that's when we went down to Bishop Estate. We found out from them that he wanted to sell. His name was Mr. Murphy. That's why that street across is Murphy [Street].
- MK: Oh, okay, now I know why. You had mentioned that in the early days the streets had no names.
- GO: At the beginning had no names. After couple of years then they started putting the names, but [earlier] had no names.
- MK: Did you know why this street is called Kamaikai?
- GO: That I don't know. But this one I know, Murphy, because the man that lived over here was Murphy, Mr. Murphy. So I think that's why. Then the other [street] was Violet. I don't know why, and Merkle [Street]. I don't know why they named that.
- MK: Since there were no street names in the beginning when you were children, how did you folks describe the area if people asked where do you live? How did you explain that to people?
- GO: Well, I guess the way we explained we would tell them when you get to Kalihi-Uka School, you just come up, pass the bridge, and then you turn. I guess that's the way we used to tell them.
- MK: I know that after your family lived up by the orphanage you moved down to the Kamaikai Street area lower than over here. Would you know why your family decided to move down here instead of staying up in the valley?
- GO: Well, I don't know if it was because would be better down here closer to town or closer to my father's job or something. That I couldn't tell you why.
- MK: And, could you describe the house that you were born in?
- GO: It was a small house. You'd be surprised how we would all fit in that house. It was just two bedrooms. Yeah. And a living room, a kitchen; we had a big kitchen. The kitchen used to go out to the

oven, you know, right across like that, and the oven was on the other side. So very small house.

MK: How about the houses surrounding your house?

GO: Well, right next to mine used to be the Silvas'. Well, finally my sister married one of the boys and that was all. The Costas built, but they sold it, they sold it to my husband's cousin. And then there was the Rodriquez, the Santos, the Nobrigas, the Gouveias, they was all Portuguese.

MK: Would you know, or guess, why so many Portuguese lived in one area?

GO: I don't know. I guess they wanna, they'd tell one another, "Oh, that's a nice place to live," or something. Or there's a place to be sold, I guess, you know, talking to one another.

MK: And, I know that you were born in that house. Can you explain how you were brought into this world?

GO: Home. That time was all midwives. There was no such thing as you had to go to the hospital and go to a doctor. I was the first one born in that house.

MK: Would you know who the midwives were back then?

GO: Mrs. Gonzalves was one and Mrs. Mascoto was another one. (Mrs. Neves was a midwife, too.) That was three that I know.

MK: So in the old days when your younger brothers were born, what would happen, say, when your mother was just about to give birth?

GO: Well, we'd call the midwife, she'd come. She'd stay there. And she would know, more or less. Sometime they used to say, "Oh, false alarm." They used to go home. Then she'd come back again. Oh, there was another midwife, Mrs. Vierra, across the street.

MK: In those days, what were the fees for a midwife?

GO: Well, they wouldn't put no fees. They would tell you to give what you could afford. They never, never did put or say it's twenty dollars or thirty dollars, no. They would just tell you to give what you could afford. There were more like those that liked to help somebody, you know. Money didn't make any difference to them, although everybody was poor. But that's the way they were.

MK: You know, when you folks were living on Kamaikai Street, what types of stores or businesses were there up here in the valley?

GO: At the beginning there was only one store, when we were kids, that I remember. One store, and after a couple of years then came another one.

MK: What were the names of these stores?

GO: One was Apau. I can't think of the other one. It was Chinese. Both were Chinese.

MK: What types of things did they sell in their store?

GO: In the line of foods, fruits, vegetables, but like with us, we had Chinese, Wah Chong. We used to get all our stuff from him. He used to be in Aala Market. We used to go, my mother used to go. She used to order. Before that used to be Ah Leong on King Street. Now with Wah Chong, he used to deliver, so he trusted us, and my mother used to go [to Aala Market]. She used to order for the month, you see. Then [when] my father would get paid, she'd go and pay her bill. Then she'd order whatever she needed. That's how they used to do.

MK: By the time you folks were living on Kamaikai Street, did you have any electricity?

GO: Not at the beginning. Electricity came [when] I was about twenty-two, I think, 'cause I remember ironing with the charcoal irons.

MK: Gee, could you tell me the story about how you had to use two charcoal irons?

GO: Well, you see, the clothes at that time, it wasn't clothes that you just wash and hang up and it's fine. Was khakis and dungarees and stuff like that. So why we had to use two irons was because if we only had one iron would take us long to iron. That iron would get cold after you iron so much, then you had to go put some more coal and let it get hot. So we used to use two irons. When this one was cold, we'd put it aside, we'd put the coal in, we'd pick the other one that was hot. That's how we used to do. That's how we used to iron fast.

MK: While you folks were living on Kamaikai Street, you were still going to the stream for laundry?

GO: Yeah.

MK: And water, you were still collecting?

GO: Yeah.

MK: How about transportation out of the valley, was there any sort of transportation?

GO: Well, at the beginning there was no transportation. We had to walk if we wanted to go to town. We had to walk from here down to King Street, [corner] Kalihi [Street] and King [Street]. Used to be the trolleys, something like a trolley, you know, and the track. That

was first, and then after, I can't remember the year, two of our friends from here, each one of them bought a bus. One was Mr. Santana, and one was Mr. Mascoto. Mr. Mascoto used to live right down here. So they had the buses and then they had the regular [schedule]. There were certain times that they would leave the valley. They'd go to the market. They park in the market on Kekaulike Street, then the ladies, men, they would go about their business and they had a time to come home. If they would miss it, they had to wait for the next bus. That would be hours before they'd go back [home] again.

MK: What was the fare like?

GO: Well, at the beginning was ten cents. One way, you know. Ten [cents to], and ten [cents] back. Then he raised it up after everything, you know how things start going up. So the next one was fifteen, I think, or twenty cents. But that's how they used to go to the market, the ladies.

Oh, and this morning I was telling my grandchildren about clothes. I told them, "You see this? Material like this we used to buy twenty yards for a dollar."

They'd say, "Grandma, twenty yards is, my goodness, it's big."

I say, "Yes, but that's how they used to sell, twenty yards for a dollar." Because at that time my auntie used to make our clothes and stuff like that.

And they [GO's grandchildren] couldn't get over it. I says, "Now you pay dollar and something for a yard."

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You know, you mentioned that a Mr. Santana ran a bus. Was he a Puerto Rican man?

GO: Portuguese.

MK: Portuguese.

GO: Santana. Well, they say it's Santana. And then this other one was Mascoto.

MK: You know, I was wondering, what do you remember about the Puerto Ricans who now live in the valley?

GO: Not much, because when the Puerto Ricans start coming, they lived on this other side by the river, you know. So we never used to contact.

Only when we'd go in the bus, you know. Then we'd talk, but not too much, no. Oh, years ago when the Puerto Ricans came and lived across there on the street going down, well, Mendez, they passed here so we talked. But at the beginning most was down that side, but now there's plenty on that side.

MK: I know during our last conversation you mentioned that your father-in-law was a hack driver. Can you explain what he used to do?

GO: Well, like, if people would miss the bus and stuff like that, and they wanted to go to town, he would take them. He'd have his stand down somewhere and people from different places would come. And you know, they'd want to get to their place because the trolleys never used to go all around so he used to be there. His hack would be there and when they'd come, you know, like taxis you go and say, "Oh, can you take me certain place." Well, he was that, he was a taxi. So then he used to make his rounds taking people here and there.

MK: And you were telling me that the horse was very intelligent?

GO: Horse knew. 'Cause sometimes my father-in-law, you know, after work he used to go take a couple of drinks. The horse used to bring him home. Believe it or not. My mother-in-law, she knew he had come, you know. She'd wait for him to come in. She never heard him coming in, so she used to go to the hack. There he was, sound asleep, and the horse knew where to come, where to turn because they had a little stable there for the horse.

MK: So actually they had the two buses, and your father-in-law.

GO: Oh, at the time that they started the buses, my father-in-law was at the beginning. But afterwards, he was a hack driver for a while, and then he went to work at Pearl Harbor.

MK: You know, I notice that there are so many Portuguese living up here, yeah? And at Christmas you had a special Portuguese masquerade custom . . .

GO: Oh, yeah, we used to go, when I was married, I used to go masquerading, my husband and I, his two cousins and their husbands. Another friend of ours, my cousin, [too], oh, we used to have a lot of fun.

MK: You have that, and I've heard of an event that's really important in August, the Lady of the Mount celebration.

GO: The Lady of the Mount [Church], yeah, we used to have a big doing over there. Yeah, we used to have, that's the patron saint of the Portuguese and they used to have a novena, they call it, for nine days. You used to go pray the rosary in church, and then they used to shoot powder, you know. They used to make this sticks of dynamite or something, and then they used to light and throw seven of them



one after another for those nine days before the regular date, the fifteenth of August.

And us children, we used to go up to the mountain, not this one here but the other one on Kalihi Street. We used to climb and go down. We used to go and look for maile and ferns with bags. This lady that used to live over here, Cambra, Virginia, she was the one that used to go with us. She used to take a big rope, tie it around her waist and then climb up the hills, you know. It's hard to climb up the hills so we'd all hang on the rope. And we used to fill bags with ferns. Beautiful ferns, we used to bring; and we used to bring it down to the church. We used to sit there at night braiding leis and we used to decorate the poles that was the old church. This [present] one have, too, but I mean that church was wooden church. The leis going around the poles.

Down on the corner here, coming from the church, hits Kalihi Street, the man would put two poles on the side and then arch they'd make. We would have leis and then we would pick up, oh, all different ferns, you know. They'd nail it to the poles and then the leis they used to put it all around. Then down by KC [Market], they used to do the same thing. Then up, they used to do the same thing. Then in the front of the church would have the same thing. It was a big celebration.

MK: And what would happen?

GO: We would go to church, we would pray the rosary, we would have benediction. Then we would have bazaar and games, you know. At that time they would allow, you know, even those dart games. You'd get prizes. Then we used to roll tickets [and have a "lucky number" game, or lottery for prizes]. We used to have a bowl, you'd roll one, you'd put in that bowl and there was another bowl. One [roll of tickets] in there and one in this bowl. So then they'd come around and buy one ticket. They would open it up and we would look. The prizes was all marked, number one, number two, number three, all marked, so if you had number one [ticket], we would look for [prize] number one, and would give it to you.

MK: What kind of things were prepared for the bazaar?

GO: Oh, we used to work. We used to make dish towels, jewelry, scarves, pillow slips. At that time [pillow slips] was cheap, you'd buy them and just make the fancy work. And crochet booties, crochet doilies, all nice things that they used to give for prizes. We used to make sweet bread and sometime we'd put three or four sweet breads for a prize. Three or four because we used to auction the sweet bread and you'd make big money when you auction because you know [it goes to] the highest bidder.

Then on Friday nights we used to have a [lucky number for a decorative fruit arrangement]. We used to tie eggs, we used to tie apples,

oranges, and pears [on it]. Then this Mrs. Vierra, she was good at sewing it, right around. They'd put a bottle of champagne underneath. And there it was hanging up. It was pretty to look at. Then we'd sell tickets, twenty-five cents a ticket. So, if you had the lucky number [ticket], you'd take [it] home, but you had to bring the frame back. It was only the fruit that was yours.

MK: Gee, that sounds really elaborate.

(Laughter)

GO: Yes, and then we used to (prepare this bean dish). That takes about five days, I think. You know, you cook them, soak them, you cook them, and then you have to change the water every day. While the water is bitter, they're not ready. Then the last days you put some salt in, change the water all the time. Then when you take one and you bite it and it's not bitter, it's ready. But you have to boil them. First you have to boil them for a long time, too. It takes a long time to cook.

MK: Was there a lot of eating at this celebration?

GO: Yeah. We used to have food. Sometime people used to cook and bring it there.

MK: I've heard of the Brotherhood.

GO: Brotherhood, yeah. Well, the Brotherhood is not strong now.

MK: What was it like back then, what did the [Lady of the Mount] Brotherhood do for the celebration?

GO: Well, at the beginning, it was kind of strong. They were the ones that would run everything. Then, I don't know. They kind of slacked down. During the war [i.e., World War II], that's when they break, because you couldn't have the processions here. [Before the war] we used to go, all the statues, all decorated--Sacred Heart, the Blessed Mother--and we would carry. Like I carried [the statues] my young days. Men would carry the Sacred Heart and we would take Saint Joseph. Men would carry the Immaculate Conception. And the Lady of the Mount used to be [carried by] the ladies, 'cause [we] just walk with the statue, four of us. Two in the front, two in the back, and walk all the way from the church, go around KC [Market], up to the school and come back to the church.

MK: I was wondering, I know in the Kakaako area . . .

GO: Yeah, that's the Holy Ghost, they call them the Holy Ghost.

MK: Did you folks celebrate the Holy Ghost?

GO: No, we don't celebrate the Holy Ghost. We used to celebrate Our

Lady of the Mount. But this different churches used to celebrate, Punchbowl, Kalihi, and Kakaako. And years ago, I remember, they used to have [a celebration] at Lady of Peace on Fort Street. They used to have it there 'cause when I was young I used to go down there.

MK: I was wondering, you know, did your family also celebrate things like birthdays?

GO: Yeah, we would, the families at home and some close friends, we used to ask some close friends to come over.

MK: I know that your mother had a lot of work to do, right, with so many children at home. Can you explain how you and your mother used to do a lot of the household chores when you were little?

GO: Well, before we would go to school, I had to see that the dishes was all washed 'cause we all used to eat about the same time. My brothers and I then come home from school. We had to make our homework, maybe we'd eat the sandwich before, then after our homework was done we had to get a rope and one of those feed bags, and take with us. We had to go up to the mountain. Sometime if it was too late to go to the mountainside we would go up to the pasture and get wood. We had to use wood for the oven and wood for our stove because we had no oil stove. And I used to hate to clean that wood stove. It had to [be] polished.

MK: Really?

GO: Oh, yeah! You had to polish it. You had to keep it nice and clean. Shining. My mother used to come and look. Oh, our nails used to get all black from the polish. And then we used to come home, put our wood down, and then we used to go to the river to get the water. Then would come home. By that time we'd come home, was time for dinner. Well, sometime, like vacation, we would play. We would play 'cause my mother's place used to go as far as the river and down on the riverside we would play down there. Six o'clock [in the evening] our church bell used to ring. We had to be home. Soon as we heard that bell, everybody had to be home. Right, come home, get cleaned up, we'd eat our dinner, then stay around and talk for a while and say our prayers and go to bed. Of course, our homework was done already. We would read if we wanted to, but you know, it was kind of hard to read with oil lamps, yeah. So we had to do most of our reading during daylight.

And then in the morning, oh, this is another thing I'd like to tell you. You know, we couldn't afford to buy mattress. My mother used to buy the material and she used to sew the mattress. Used to go up to the pasture, cut grass, that Hilo grass, you know it grows big. We would dry it up and we would fill the mattress up. She'd leave a space [in the mattress so that it could be filled], and then she'd make rough stitches, close it up. Then she'd check the mattress. Well, it was going down low already, so it was time to go and . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: We were talking about the mattress.

GO: The mattress, yeah. So before it would go down very low, we would go and pick up [more grass] and would tie it up and put it on top of the chicken house or something to get dry. It had to be dry before we put it in the mattress.

MK: The last time I saw you, you also explained to me how you had to clean the floors in those days.

GO: Oh, yeah, was with the coconut.

MK: How did you folks do it?

GO: We saw the coconut in half. I don't know what they call it, the inside of the coconut, that thick stuff. My brothers used to crack it little bit right around with the hammer. Then at that time we didn't have powder for wash clothes. Was all the bars [of soap]. Well, when it would come to the end, you know, how it gets so thin, we used to put it in a bottle, save it for the coconut. We used to get a big bucket with water, old rags, put inside. We'd wet a portion of the floor and then we would put the soap in the coconut and we'd scrub floors. Then take the rag, go over it again, then another bucket with the clean water. Then take that and wash the floors. And the floor, it was nice after you washed it. Nice and clean 'cause it wasn't painted. And my mother used to come and check because if you don't wash one spot it shows, you know, when it's dry. There's a little spot, right, there's a little spot. You go back and scrub it.

MK: You mentioned last time that your mother didn't really speak English.

GO: No. She would understand but she couldn't make a conversation. But one day she wanted to patch my dress. [See] I couldn't work with nice clothes. I wanted something real old, you know, where you're gonna get dirty. I was ironing clothes and she says, "I'm gonna put this patch."

"No, it's too dark," I told her in Portuguese. Well, I went ahead with my ironing. She went sew all by hand and after she had it sewed, she lift up the dress.

She says, "Oh, yeah." That's for me to look. I looked. She says, "Dark be then." And I just laughed and laughed.

"Mom," I said, "you said you can't speak English. Those are two English words you said."

She looked at me and she couldn't help but laugh. She thought it

was funny, too, when she says.

I remember one day, when she was sick, a friend of hers used to come and see her all the time. She's Portuguese and she was married to a Japanese man, Gora. My mother says, "You know, when Mrs. Gora comes, speak to her in Portuguese."

"All right." I spoke to her in Portuguese. My mother thought if I talked English, wouldn't be nice because she was a Portuguese. I spoke to her Portuguese, she answers me in English. After she went home I told my mother, "When she comes again, I'm not gonna talk to her in Portuguese. She understands English, she answered me back in English." So my mother looked at me. I say, "I'm not. She comes again, I'm gonna speak English."

So, yeah, my mother, she understand [English], she would know. But I guess she didn't wanna [speak it], you know; but those two words I never forgot.

MK: And how did you learn your Portuguese?

GO: From my mother. My mother and my grandma. My grandfather, he used to come to our house a lot. My grandma, well, she was tiny little delicate type, and she'd stay home. Well, she came once in a while, but my grandfather always used to come because my brothers. You know, talk. Oh, we used to have a lot of fun with him. He had only one hand, too. He had lost his hand on New Year's. The Portuguese was fond of shooting that powder, yeah? Was too late when he threw it and, oh, no fingers, nothing. She had to rush him to the emergency.

MK: You know, since you have such a large family with a lot of children here, did a lot of the neighborhood children come out over to your house to play?

GO: Over here? Yeah. But my brothers, that was the headquarters, all the boys.

MK: What kind of things did the boys do then, back then?

GO: Well, they used to make their own tops. From the guava branches they used to make peewee sticks and then little sticks like that. They used to dig little bit in the dirt. They used to put the stick [in there] and then they used to hit. You hit with the big stick, if you'd miss, well, you was out. And marbles.

Then on Christmas they used to build a little grass shack. They used to get boards and everything else, going here and there. They used to go up the pasture, get the grass, and then each boy used to bring something. At the midnight mass they would bring something and they'd go spend the night over there in that little shack eating and drinking their small soda. But after they grew up, well, they never used to make grass shacks. They used to stay in the house.



They used to have a lot of fun. Then they used to get together and go down to the river. They used to bring 'ōpaes and 'o'opus, they used to cook it outside.

MK: How about you and the other girls?

GO: Well, we didn't have much time to play 'cause we had our chores. Then, you know, if we wanted extra money, my mother couldn't afford to give us, so we used to go wash clothes for people that wanted. They didn't want to go to the river like that, so we used to go. For ten cents, we'd wash one big tub of clothes. That's how we would spend our time growing up, washing clothes for somebody that really wanted help.

MK: I remember you saying that you were brought up a certain way, you know, the family was very close, but also very strict. Can you explain how your family life was?

GO: Well, we had a good life. My father was very strict, but he was kind. My mother, too. She would always want us [to] be nice, friends with everybody. Don't get yourself in trouble. The boys used to come, the girls used to come to our house, too. My friends used to come and everybody used to enjoy themselves. The boys used to play out in the yard, the girls would play in the house. Everybody used to have a nice time.

My father was very strict. With his fruit trees, he wouldn't allow any of us to pick up the fruit unless he picked up himself because when he picked, he knew just the ones that was ready to eat. And he'd pick and everybody would have their share. Then if there was extras he'd give to the neighbors. One day we were playing down on the riverside and we heard the bell, so we all came home. We had a big soursap tree . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Now you were telling me about the soursap tree.

GO: Yeah. So when my brothers came up, they all came ahead of me. So they all went and feel'd the soursap. I was the last one. When I went and feel'd to see if it was dry, it fell down. We all came in the house, wash the hands. My father, he usually goes around see if there's any to pick up and stuff like that. So he held the soursap down and you could see the fingerprints, you know, when you touch. So he came inside.

"Oh, who knocked this down?"

"I don't know, I don't know."

He said, "Nobody knows how it fell down?"



So he went in his bedroom, so when I heard him tiptoes, you know. When he tiptoes, he's a little angry. So I told my brothers, "I'm gonna tell him."

They said, "Yeah, but then he's gonna spank you."

I said, "But I'm gonna tell him."

So he came out. He says, "Well, this is the last chance I'm giving you," in Portuguese, you know. "Eh, I'd like to know how this fell down."

So I told him, "Papa, we all touched it, but when I touched it, it fell down."

"Well, it's a good thing you came out with the truth," he says, "or else all of you was gonna get it." Wasn't only one of us that was gonna get it, was all of us.

I was ten [years old] when my father died and I only had spanking from him one time. Well, I deserved it because he explained it to me. See, those barrels with water that I was telling you [about earlier], well, I wanted to see how much water was in there so I took the screen [off the top], peeped, and lost my balance. I went down. Good thing one of my brothers passed by. He started yelling for my father. So my father came and pulled me out. He pulled me out, he pat me to get the water off. So then he tell me, "I'm gonna spank you." "And you know why?" he says. "I hate to do it, but that's to give you a lesson that you're not supposed to do that. You could have died. What if your brother didn't pass by. If he didn't pass by, you would have died because you would get choked." So he spanked me. That's the only time I had spanking from my father.

[Later,] something else happened, but my father was dead already. My mother was short, like me you know, and eh, she wasn't afraid. My brothers were playing cards. Two of them got into a fight. She got hold of a strap. She called all the other ones to come and watch. She spanked the two of them. She didn't care who had started it. "From now on," she says, "I don't want to see any of you brothers getting into a fight. You must remember you folks are brothers." Boy, never more. Not one of my brothers got into a fight. Yeah, she was strict. My mother, my parents were strict, but it was for our own good, because after all, they had so many children to raise, and it was hard.

MK: Especially after your father died.

GO: Yeah.

MK: So many children.

- GO: You ain't kidding. Yeah, it was really hard for her. So that's a lesson that they got. They never fought again. It was my brother Domingos, we used to call him Dean, for short. And was my brother John. My brother John was a twin with my brother Tony.
- MK: I know that you went to school at the Sacred Hearts Convent.
- GO: Yeah.
- MK: Can you explain how you used to go down to Sacred Hearts Convent, especially on a rainy day?
- GO: Well, we had to wait and see when it was clear. Then we'd walk and then going down, it would rain, you know. We would look for shelter, someplace. But we had to walk and we had all dirt road, not paved roads. When it was all muddy, we used to take our shoes, an old rag, wash our feet down by Kalihi Street, below School Street, in a ditch on the side of the road. Used to wash our feet, dry it, put our shoes on, then walk all the way to the convent. It was on Fort Street next to the cathedral. Then walk home again because they couldn't afford to give us fare for the bus or the streetcar. At that time, I think was streetcars or was still the trolleys. I'm not sure. And was my brothers and myself, so even though it was five cents, still they couldn't afford it. But there was a group of boys and a group of girls that used to walk. My cousin used to go with them and their two other girlfriends that we had. So we all used to walk to school and back.
- MK: I was wondering, you mentioned your brothers also went to school. What school?
- GO: St. Louis. On Aala Street, by Aala Park. That used to be St. Louis College over there.
- MK: While you were at Sacred Hearts Convent, what did you like the most about school then?
- GO: Oh, I guess everything.
- MK: Was there anything you didn't like about the school then?
- GO: No, because the nuns were really nice, you know, and the children that was in school, too, they were really nice. I enjoyed school very much, only I had to quit when I was young. 'Cause my mother, she got real sick. She had rheumatism in her hands and her back, her feet. So she went and she asked the nuns, and they didn't want [me] to leave because I was only in the sixth grade. But my mother says that my two sisters were married. One was living in Kona and one was down here. So anyway, I had to quit school to stay home, do all the washing, the cooking, the ironing. That was my life.
- MK: So in a way you helped raise your younger brothers?

GO: Yeah, and even after they were grown up they still came to live with me. Yeah, when my younger brother wanted to get married, there was no house. Couldn't find a house, so my mother came and asked my husband and I if I would let her and my three brothers come with us. What you gonna say, it's family, so I told my husband, "Look, my mother's gonna ask you something, it's up to you 'cause after all I'm married."

So he says, "Oh, well, you're the one that's gonna do all the work, not me." So he said okay. So they came, they lived here. So all my life I've taken care of my family.

MK: That's something you can be proud of.

GO: Well, that's what everybody tells me. "It's hard to find a person like you."

Like when my mother was in the hospital for three months during the war [World War II], she wouldn't eat the food from the hospital, not even the orange juice. So I had to cook lunch for her. She would tell me the day before what she wanted for lunch, what she felt like eating. Then I had to fix dinner for her. Well, lunch, I used to go on the bus 'cause my husband was working. Well, dinnertime, he'd take me down. Two times a day I had to go there for three months.

Then when she came home she begged me not to take her to the hospital in case she get sick. Well, she was home two months, she had a stroke. She was paralyzed on her right side, so the doctor came and the doctor told me, "You cannot take care of her, she is paralyzed, and how can you turn her around."

I says, "Well, I'll try." She begged me not to put her back into the hospital. In the meantime, my husband's auntie came in and she heard the conversation, 'cause we were talking when she came. So she told the doctor, "I'll help her, we'll try." So she did. When was [time] to give my mother a bath, change her bedclothes, she'd come down, help me. Oh, the rest was easy. The food, to feed her and all of that was easy. . . .

Poor thing, [my mother] lived two weeks and I was happy that I didn't put her back [in the hospital] 'cause it would break her heart and then it would make me feel real bad. And she always told me, "You know, when I die, I want lot of company." She did have, 'cause I had a feeling she wasn't well. So I called my sister and my aunties, my cousins, so we had a full house when she passed away. So she was happy, I guess, seeing everybody. Yeah, that's my life.

MK: That was during World War II, right?

GO: Yeah.

MK: How about, you know, life for you during World War I? You were

about seventeen years old?

GO: Oh, we remember my brothers, some of them, two of my brothers were drafted. It was hard. You know, you couldn't get certain things. We had to make our bread mixed with wheat and stuff like that. Wheat flour and all of that. It was kind of hard. But I guess we survived.

MK: What was it like in Kalihi during those war years?

GO: Oh, nothing happened to Kalihi the First World War. The Second World War. That's when I lost my two daughters, my brother, and my nephew all from the same shrapnels that came in through the house and . . .

MK: I think during the next interview I'm going to ask you about . . .

GO: Oh, about that.

MK: But now I was wondering, you had already mentioned your husband. What was your husband's name?

GO: Frank Ornellas.

MK: Frank Ornellas. How did you two meet?

GO: Oh, well, (chuckles) my brother was married to his sister.

MK: Oh.

GO: So I used to go visit my sister-in-law and we met. My sister-in-law was living down the other side and she moved up here, right next. His father married as my mother-in-law had passed away. His stepmother had a lot of boys, three boys, and one daughter. I guess he felt, you know, they wouldn't get along. But my husband was good-natured, he'd get along with anybody. But my sister-in-law only had a little boy so she had extra room. So she shared the house that she was living, had three bedrooms. So he asked her if he could stay with her, and she said yeah, so he came.

So we started seeing more of one another. Then we started going out together. I remember they used to have that park and we used to go ride "The Dipper." We used to take his young sister. Oh, she was afraid. She'd hang onto me. I says, "Don't be afraid, nothing is going to happen." She didn't want to ride it again. She came down and we told her, "You want to ride it again?"

"No!"

So yeah, he was twenty-six and I was twenty-three when we got married.

MK: How was your wedding done?

GO: Well, at that time we had the hall, we had a hall where the Brotherhood of the church [used to meet]. The Brotherhood had a big hall over there, so at that time there was no big deal like now, you know. Lotta food and stuff like that. That time was sandwiches and some roast meat and salad and was plain at that time. So that's where we had our party. We got married at the Lady of the Mount Church.

MK: I bet it was a big one in terms of the number of people that came to the wedding and the reception.

GO: Oh, yeah, we had his side and my side and my friends and his friends. It was quite a bit that came. But some of my friends cook, everybody helped out. We did quite a bit in my house, my friends came to help me there. Those that couldn't come, they [prepared things] at their own house. At that time, I don't know, people used to be so close together. So we helped one another. Well, I still do if I can.

MK: But those days you really felt that people were closer?

GO: Oh, yeah. At those days we would respect the old people. Nowadays these kids don't care to respect old people. My goodness, and like with me, I would talk to them all in Portuguese to the old people. I would never talk English to them, always in Portuguese. My mother used to be sick most of the time, you know, when she had rheumatism, [and] all the old people used to come and see her, so I used to talk to them in Portuguese. Used to have my conversations with them, so that's how I can speak good. My cousin always tells me her mother used to speak Portuguese and her son always tells her, "You know, Cousin can speak better Portuguese than you, why?"

She says, "Well, I guess she used to talk to the old ladies more than I did." The old ladies used to live one over there and one up here, two up here, they used to come and visit my mother a lot, you see. So, of course, when they were talking to my mother in Portuguese, I was listening, I was doing something. I was listening and I was getting every word that they would say, so that's how [I learned].

MK: For today, I'm going to end here, and then I'm going to continue next time.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 11-16-2-84

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

"Gussie" Ornellas (GO)

January 5, 1984

Kalihi Valley, Oahu

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. "Gussie" Ornellas at her home in Kalihi Valley, Oahu on January 5, 1984.

Okay, since today is such a rainy day, I'm going to have you kind of remember and retell the story you just told me about that rainy, hail-filled day [in ca. 1935] that you remembered.

GO: (Chuckles) Well, I had gone to town. We went to pick my daughter up from school. Came up. [Before that] we picked my brother at the railroad. On our way coming up, we got to the Kalihi-Uka School. There's a park there. First we felt that [hail] hitting the roof of the car. Then we got to the school and we looked, and there was the ground, the park, just white. So we pulled aside because it was raining real hard. We stayed there for a while wondering what was that all about. We didn't know. After a while, it kinda cleared up a little bit. We were going to come home. Got to the bridge. Policeman was there. He says, "You cannot go." When we looked, the water was over the bridge. So we had to go to a friend's house. We stayed there for a while. Then when it was clear, the police said we could come home. Then, we came home. My husband was worried. My mother was worried. Because we hadn't showed up. This was about seven thirty at night. (Chuckles) When I came home, there was my poor mother, my husband, downstairs. It rained so much, our basement got flooded. They were sweeping out the water. I told them, "Don't do that." I says, "Just let it [alone]. Tomorrow, we'll do it." Because they were soaking their feet all wet and everything.

They said, "Yeah, I think we leave it till tomorrow."

So, well, the next day, it wasn't too much water there. You know, it had soaked down.

MK: That was when you were pregnant with your son?

GO: I was pregnant to have my fourth boy. Because I had three girls



and then him. That's the one that's in Minnesota [now].

MK: And he's about forty-eight years old now?

GO: Mm hmm [yes], mm hmm.

MK: I also heard that in the lower part of Kalihi--not in the valley, but in the lower part of Kalihi in the 1930s--there was a big flood.

GO: Oh, yeah. That's the river. That's the river right on that side. Oh, it was terrible. The homes close to King Street, the homes are close. It was terrible. The water went right through.

MK: What else do you remember about that flood?

GO: I'm not sure if somebody got hurt. I know lot of animals went down, because those homes that were close to the river. . . . You know, at that time, everybody raised their own [animals for food]. And lot of them went down.

My son, he had some chickens. He had them down on the gulch--we call it the gulch side. We had a storm, the rain came and took the coops down. I don't know. I couldn't tell you what year it was. Oh, well, I just can't remember what year it was, but that happened.

MK: The next thing I want to talk about is, well, after you and your husband got married, first you lived with your mother. Then about fifty years ago you moved to this house that we're doing the interview in. How did you folks manage to get this house and lot at that time?

GO: Well, this was belong to Mr. Murphy. He's a German. He wanted to sell because he was getting old. He wanted to go back to Germany. So, we asked him who he would have [to be] the agent to sell it. He says Bishop Trust, because part of this land up here belong to Bishop Trust. So, we went to Bishop Trust and we told them that Mr. Murphy had said he wanted to sell his place. They says yes, that he had gone down to tell them. They came and they measured and surveyed and everything. They told us that we could get it for \$500. Well, at that time, was big money for us. (Chuckles) So, we bought it.

MK: At that time, what kind of work was your husband doing?

GO: He was a concrete mix man. That was his trade. When he was a younger boy, well he used to work labor. But then, as he grew up, I don't know, I guess the man that used to run it must have taught him. Then, he started. That was his job for years and years. Royal Hawaiian Hotel, he was the one that made all the concrete for that building.

MK: In those days, how did this house and lot look fifty years ago?

GO: Well, I guess, look the same, but only now, it looks a little nicer

because we painted it lately. (Chuckles) But we had lot of mango trees. This place was filled up with mango trees. That little German man, Mr. Murphy, had that small, little house, and all around was all mango trees. So, we had to cut.

MK: So, this house was newly built?

GO: Oh, yes.

MK: You bought the lot from Mr. Murphy?

GO: Yeah, mm hmm. My husband's grandma, she lived across. I never forget that when she heard we had bought the place, she was so happy she gave us five dollars gold. For good luck, she says. (Chuckles)

MK: I guess she really wanted to have family . . .

GO: Yes, uh huh.

MK: And there were already other family members living on this particular street.

GO: Yeah. But she was so happy. She didn't know how to speak English, and I used to talk to her in Portuguese all the time. So, I guess she liked us because I spoke Portuguese. Well, my husband, he knew Portuguese, but he wouldn't talk. Like with me, my mother, she had lot of friends this way, and they were all elderly just like her. So, they used to come here and visit her. We used to make conversation. That's how I learned more [Portuguese]--was being with them. But I'm glad that I did. (Chuckles)

MK: That way, you could be company for your mother-in-law and your grandmother.

GO: My grandmother.

MK: By the time you people moved into this house, it was during the depression years. How did your family manage during those years?

GO: Well, it wasn't too bad when we moved here because already we could get things which we couldn't in the First World War. We managed. See, with Portuguese, they really know how to stretch. They can make soup. As long as they have soup bones, you salt them up and you leave them for two, three days. That makes a big difference when you make your soup.

I made soup Tuesday. Yesterday was Wednesday, yeah. I made soup Tuesday. I hadn't made for two weeks. The children just went for it. The two boys, they had three (chuckles) helpings. So, my daughter-in-law--she's Indian, but she likes Portuguese soup. She ate some for lunch yesterday, and she asked me if there was plenty left. I says, "Yeah. There's one small bowl and there's

another bowl."

She says, "Could I take some to work?" Because a girl had brought some. She says, "Supposed to be Portuguese soup, but it doesn't taste like Portuguese soup." So, she took. (Chuckles) So, the girls there wanted to know how the soup was nice and yellow.

"What does she puts in there to make that taste so good?" And this and that, and everything else.

So she says, "Well, she had Portuguese sausage. She had ham hocks"--we call it. "I think she had soup bones." She wasn't sure if I had used soup bones. "I think she had soup bones. She salts it."

And they said, "Oh, so that's the secret of the Portuguese soup."

I had split pea, and I had put some carrots chopped fine, little onion, celery, [and squash]. It's like a little squash. They don't grow too big. Well, I had two in the Frigidaire, so I chopped it all up fine. My family don't like to eat it like that, you know, as a vegetable. But I put it in soup, I put it in stew, and they don't know and they eat it. (Laughs)

MK: So, during the depression years, you had that type of food to kind of stretch . . .

GO: Yeah, well, we couldn't afford to put sausage and ham hocks in there. Was only the soup bones that we used to get from the market--Lewers Metropolitan [Meat] Market.

MK: And then, you had the Prohibition years up here. When I first mentioned it, you kind of laughed. What happened up here?

GO: (Laughs) Well, my father used to make way ['ōkolehao] up when they were in the valley. I never got to see that, but my mother always told us that he used to make for home use. But there was some of them that they used to make and sell it, you know, to the neighbors. There was Mr. Gonsalves on the other side. He used to make wine, because, oh, he had a big place and it was all grapevine. So, he used to make wine--really good wine, he used to make.

MK: What did your father make?

GO: My father used to make 'ōkolehao.

(Laughter)

GO: Used to make it from the ti [root] leaf. I don't know, I think they used to kinda brown it a little bit, I'm not sure. But they used to pound it. Then, they used to put some yeast, I think, and ferment. They knew just when to make, you know. Well, he never

got caught, but some of the men got caught. (Laughs) My mother said my father didn't, but afterwards he stopped. After they start coming more often around. So, he stopped. He didn't make anymore.

MK: Once you and your husband got married and your children started to come, how was life for your family--you know, yourself, your husband and your children--in this community?

GO: Well, fine. At that time, when we moved here, we were here couple of years, then my mother moved in. That's when my brother got married. Well, he had a little girl the age of my second one. So, they used to play together. Then, a neighbor from up here had little children. They all used to come. One thing with the children before, they used to play very nicely together. It's not like now. You know, for me, I find big difference.

MK: What's the difference that you notice?

GO: They don't agree. You know, they like to get their own way. [Before,] they used to play and get along. Only my little girl, that's my third daughter, her name was Barbara. But from the hospital, she was so tiny, the nurses gave her the name of "Tiny." And that's how everybody knows her is by the name of "Tiny." And my brother's little girl was Betty. The two of them just about the same age. My husband had built a nice little playhouse in the back. A dollhouse. It wasn't big, but the children could go in and lie down. So, my little girl used to like to play with the toys and all that. Betty used to play, but as soon as my oldest boy with his friends would be playing baseball, oh, Betty would leave Tiny alone and she'd run and play baseball. (Laughs)

MK: Those days, where did the kids play?

GO: Well, they used to play over here in my yard because they were small. When they grew up a little more, they had a place up here. We used to call it the "pasture." From my brother's time, they used to go and they cleaned up the place. Cut all the bushes down and all of that. That's where they used to play.

MK: Was it a real park or actually someone's pasture area?

GO: They just made. That was a pasture. Nobody made use of it, so the kids went. Because at that time, you know, it's not like now. My goodness. Now, you can't go from your yard to somebody's yard. But at that time, you see, it was most Portuguese, and they all had children, and they used to agree with one another. So, that's where they used to play ball. But like with my children, they used to play in the front here. Between the house and the garage. We used to let them play there. Because they were small.

MK: As the children grew a little bit older, what type of church activities did your family participate in with the children?

- GO: Well, we used to go to Mass every Sunday. And the children used to go to--well, they call it the bible reading. We call it "catechism." And we used to have the fairs. Of course, the family all used to work. We all agreed to work with one another. The different ones. We used to have bazaars. Different kind of bazaars. They sell ice cream. Used to be good. And there was games for the children to play.
- MK: How about at the schools that they attended?
- GO: Well, my children, my oldest one went to St. Louis. St. Theresa first, and then from St. Theresa he went to St. Louis. This second one went to St. Theresa. From there, he went to Farrington. My oldest girl went to Sacred Hearts. And then, she came to St. Theresa, because it was kinda hard for us to pay. She was going to graduate that year [1942]. And then, the second one went to St. Theresa.
- MK: By those times, how did your children go to school? I know, in your time, you had to walk.
- GO: Oh, well, at that time, when they started going to school, had buses.
- MK: All the way up here in the valley?
- GO: Yeah.
- MK: What were your feelings about your son attending Farrington High School?
- GO: Well, I didn't mind because he wanted to go there. You can't choose the schools for your children.
- MK: What was the reason that he chose to go to Farrington?
- GO: I don't know. I guess closer to home or something. So, he graduated from Farrington.
- MK: I notice, you said your son was very active in sports?
- GO: Oh, yeah, both of them. The oldest one played football for St. Louis. And this one, well, this one played when he was in the lower grades at Farrington. But then, when he grew up, I don't know. He played but not so much. But after, baseball was his favorite. So, even now, he plays baseball. (Chuckles)
- MK: As a mother, what sort of customs or values--you know, beliefs--that you kinda wanted to pass on to your children when they were growing up?
- GO: Well, all I used to tell them is to try and do the best they could in school. Make friends, try hard, and be a good boy. Don't go around and then come home and say, "Mom, I did this, and you going to be called," and stuff like that, you see. I says, "Always behave."



Because your uncles, your grandma had no trouble with them." I says, "And you folks can behave." I always used to tell them when they grew up, "When you go out with a girl, think that she's your sister. And you wouldn't want anybody to do anything to your sister that wasn't right." I says, "So, keep that in mind." I always used to advise them, "Keep that in mind," to the boys. The girls, well, I used to tell them to be careful when they go out. Be very careful.

(Chuckles) So far, so good.

MK: Now you got grandchildren and everything.

GO: Yeah, like the one [son] in the Mainland. He would have been married, but when he was in college in the Mainland he had a "Dear John" letter from his girlfriend. So, I guess he felt, well, "I guess I wasn't the type to be married."

MK: I'm going to change the subject now. You told me that during World War II, it was really a tragic time for your family.

GO: Oh, yeah. It was hard.

MK: I was wondering if you could again tell me on tape what happened on December 7.

GO: December 7, 1941. I used to work. That's when they were making lot of buildings for the Army and Navy. Mr. Vierra, he was the foreman there. So, they needed some ladies, after the buildings were made, to clean up before the service people would come in. So anyway, I went. He asked me to go. I was the oldest, so he put me in charge of the other girls. I used to work every day. Then, on Sundays was my day to go shopping because the stores, markets, and all was all open. So my husband and I used to go to the early Mass. Then I used to come home, get the children ready. We used to go down, drop them in church, and then we'd go to the market. On the way coming up, I looked up and I saw so much smoke. We had my husband's auntie with us. I told my husband and I told her, I says, "Oh, my goodness. Look at all that smoke up in the sky."

She says, "Oh, it must be the planes practicing."

Then, I saw my cousin going down. He was [usually] a slow driver. [But] he was going kinda fast. I told my husband, "Look, Fred is going down, and he's going down fast." I said, "I wonder if something happened."

So, got to the school. I saw everybody outside. So, I asked them. I says, "What happened?"

They says, "We don't know, but whatever happened was up your street."

So, we came up. We got down about a block down. Here was a American



Legion man telling that we couldn't come up because there was a big hole in the middle of the road coming into my garage. So they said we can't go. Then, one boy came. I says, "What happened?"

He says, "Whatever happened was at your place."

Oh, we left everything. My husband and I ran up. When we came, they had brought my oldest girl. They had laid her down over here. There was a nurse that used to live below, she was here. She was out on the porch. One of the [American] shrapnels hit her [GO's oldest daughter] on the main artery and she was bleeding. By the time the ambulance came and all of that, we got to the hospital, it was too late. Then, I asked for my boy and my other girl. Oh, they say, "I think Frank is downstairs with the uncle in the basement."

I said, "Where's Tiny?" Nobody knew where Tiny was. That was their bedroom. When I went in there, I saw her flat on the floor. One of the shrapnels went right through her temple. One of them, she had a gash, this--her wrist. She was dead. Then, my nephew downstairs, one shrapnel went down there. He was just coming out of the bathroom. Hit him. My brother was cleaning his car and the shrapnels ripped his side all up. So, Fred [GO's cousin] took him with another friend of ours, and they put him in the car and they rushed him because the ambulance take long to come. You know, roads were blocked and everything. Then, the ambulance came. Yeah, the ambulance was here. They were taking my oldest girl and my nephew.

In the meantime, we didn't know where Tiny was. That's when I opened the door, and there she was. So, I told some of my friends, I says, "Tell the ambulance to stop because there's Tiny. They have to pick Tiny up." So then, they took the three of them. Then, they stopped us from going down. We were going to the hospital, but they said, "No, you cannot go," and this and that and everything else. So, we couldn't go to the hospital. After I don't know how many hours, then they told. My husband went to the hospital. So then, when he came home, he said. . . . Well, Tiny, I knew she was dead because right through her temples. I know she couldn't pull through. That, I'm sure she was dead, but the sister was still alive when they left. My nephew, too. He was dead, too. So, there was four in the family.

MK: Your mother was also home?

GO: Yeah, my mother was feeding the chickens. She saw the stones--well, they're like stones because they're iron--and she says, "Oh, my goodness. I wonder who's--," you know. Because in the olden days, if they wanted to break a big rock, they used to put powder and explode the thing. It used to fly around. So, she says, "Oh, why are they doing that?" She didn't know what it was. Until

when she came in the house. By the time that this happened, she already had come in. Then, that's when she saw what was going on. She was lucky that none hit her because if it would hit her in the head, that would be it.

MK: After that happened that day, you said that there was a very sad . . .

GO: Oh, yeah.

MK: . . . funeral for the family. Was your family the only family that was affected by the . . .

GO: No, my husband's cousin used to live across, too. She got hurt. But it just passed by, you know, just a scratch. But her daughter, see, the wires fell down. They were going to her sister's house up here that had a basement. She stepped on the wire. The little girl. So, it affected her leg. Her leg is short. She's on the Mainland now. Then, my auntie's house, the shrapnels went through, but nobody got hurt. It was only us here and across.

MK: Was there any other part of the valley affected that day?

GO: No, it was just around here. Then, one bomb fell on that side, the river. But you see, over there, it's all soft dirt, so it went right down. It didn't explode. Went right down. But this one was the road, and, of course, hit something hard, yeah?

MK: For your family, then, it was really a tragic day.

GO: Oh, it was awfully hard to take. I wouldn't open their bedroom. I just couldn't [for] one year. My mother used to go in there and kinda air it out, but I just couldn't go in there. Our pastor used to come all the time and ask me, "Open it."

"I can't." I says, "I can't."

So then, my mother with my cousin, they cleaned it up. They took everything out that was from them. So then, after one year, I went in there. Oh, but the first days, the holidays, oh, it was terrible. The following Christmas, we were invited out for dinner--you know, spend the holiday--I just couldn't go. I told my husband, "You go."

He says, "No, I'm not going."

I says, "Go. Well, go and at least show yourself and then come back."

So, I was making salad, and the tears just rolling down. I had a friend that used to live on that side--Mrs. Bush. She and the husband came. She looked at me. She says, "Gussie, you go in the bathroom. Have a good, good cry. I'll finish up the salad for you." So I did. I went in the bathroom, had a good, good cry. Then, I came

out and I felt better. They stayed with me until my husband [came home]. . . . My husband didn't stay long. He came. He was going down to the father's place. He had a stepmother. So, then, I felt better, but, oh, every. . . . For years. You know, the holidays would hit you real hard. Think of them every time. At night, I used to cry. My husband tell me, "It's happened. We can't do nothing about it." Oh, but still. So, as they say, that's life. But it's awful to have your oldest children, yeah?

And then, you know, when they babies like that. Like my first one I lost, she only lived eight hours after she was born. That wasn't too bad, because you just saw her for a little while and that was it. But like this one, sixteen and eight. The second one, oh, my husband's grandma used to love that little girl because she acted like a little old lady. A neighbor, an old maid, used to live over here. She says, "You know, that girl, she acts like a grownup girl." She used to see her sweeping the sidewalks. I know when she used to clean house, she used to like to go down with the dust mop, and oh, every little corner. Like my mother always used to tell us in Portuguese when we never used to do things right, "Ha! You just did the part where, if you had a mother-in-law, she would come and she would see that was clean."

(Laughter)

GO: But that little one, oh, she was really clean. The other one was really good, too. She was clean and she was good. She used to cook, because I was working. She used to come from school. I used to tell her, but my mother would always be here, too. My mother would always tell her what to do. She used to iron and everything. She was good.

MK: You must really miss them both.

GO: Oh, yeah.

MK: As the war years went on, how was it for the family up here with the martial law, and the rationing, and the blackouts?

GO: Well, I guess, we all had to get used to with it. Of course, we used to complain. Like the bread. Of course, we weren't used to mixing the flour with wheat and stuff like that. Because we only used to make plain flour. Of course, the first time we made bread, it didn't turn out too good because, you know. (Chuckles) But we didn't make very much, because not to get too hard. But then, we got used to. Then we learned to put little bit more yeast and stuff like that. We never used to have this yeast that you buy. We used to make our own yeast. Like we used to bake bread today, and we used to take part of that yeast, put it in a bowl. We used to mix it little bit more and keep it there for the next time we would cook bread.

MK: So the rationing affected you then?

GO: Yeah.

MK: How about the blackouts?

GO: Oh, the blackout, we had to have everything black out. Oh, and then my mother got real sick. She was in bed. Oh, we had hard time. I had hard time. I used to sleep with her because I was afraid something would happen. My room was there and her room was in the back there. And I couldn't sleep. I was afraid something would happen to her. And blackout. So, you know what I used to do?

I used to keep my glasses (chuckles) on.

MK: Oh, no. (Laughs)

GO: Because with my glasses, I can't fall asleep. I was afraid to take them off because I'd fall asleep, then something would happen to her, and I'd be so afraid. Because we couldn't put the lights on.

MK: Gee, the war years were really hard for you.

GO: Oh, yeah. But as I say, we survived.

MK: As the war ended and your remaining children grew up, there were many changes up here in the valley.

GO: Oh, yeah.

MK: What were some of the changes you noticed after the war?

GO: Well, after the war, then different people start coming. You see, some of the Portuguese moved. And I don't know, then other people start coming. Well, still it was about the same, because the Portuguese would, you know, mingle with the Portuguese. Because those, you didn't know their ways. You know, if they wanted to. . . . Like my nephew, when he sold that place, he sold it to a Japanese man. So, they were nice. And then they sold it to a Filipino. And then, the Filipino sold to another Filipino and all that. They're nice neighbors, though. Then, this one, too, over here is Filipinos. Filipino was the one that bought it, and then even now, it's Filipinos. Although that was from an old maid.

She used to take care of her father and mother. They left the place to her. She had a grapevine, but she never used to make wine. She used to sell, though. She used to sell the grapes. Take it down to the market. She used to sell it. My son, the one that's living here, he was about two or two and a half years old. He knew that every time I'd make soup or something different, I always used to call her across the fence. I used to give her a little bowl of soup or whatever I'd make. Because I knew she was by herself, and she was the type who wouldn't bother to go cook something. And I felt sorry for her. So, this day, well, she didn't

have grapes because every time she would have grapes, she always used to give us. But, of course, I guess, he [GO's son] didn't know. He was two and a half. He went and he says, "Virginia, give me some grapes."

She says, "I don't have grapes. No more grapes!" She used to talk rough.

So, he turned around, he says, "When my mother makes soup, I'm going to tell her not to give you."

(Laughter)

GO: I heard him. I says, "What are you saying?"

He said, "I asked Virginia for grapes. She didn't want to give me grapes."

I said, "She don't have. There's no grapes now. It's not the season. And what did you tell her?"

"I told her when you'd make soup, I was going tell you not to give her."

MK: (Laughs) But that was the old custom, yeah? Kind of trading of food, yeah?

GO: Yeah. Like her, I always, because she used to go work. Hard digging. You know, Kawahara, that Japanese man, used to live over there, he used to hire her. He used to plant oranges, those big tangerines. She used to go there and work. Then, I felt sorry. She'd come home. You know, to go cook, tired. So, I used to give her soup.

MK: So, she was here a long time and eventually sold her house. . . .

GO: Well, when she passed away, then her nephew took over. Then, he sold it. Because then, afterwards, they had to put her in a home. She was in a home.

MK: So, one of the major changes you've noticed up here was people changing? Different people . . .

GO: Yeah, different people moving in and all. Like right now, from there, well, this one is Filipino, then there's a Japanese, but all the rest going down, it's all Filipinos and Japanese. Only my husband's cousin, that's the one that have the house on the corner, but all the rest is Japanese and Filipinos.

MK: What are your feelings about that change in the valley, where the population has changed?

GO: Well, I don't know. To me, everybody's my friend. That's the way



I feel, regardless what nationality and all of that. If they want to live up here, it's okay. Because I had a [neighbor]. . . . She always sends me a Christmas card. She'd send. This year, she wrote, she says, "You know, I love you very much, my husband and I. You're our good, good neighbor." You know why? She had a little boy, seven years old. He had cancer in the lungs. Poor little thing. They used to take him to Tripler. He used to stay for a while, then he'd get a little better, he'd come home. So, every time he'd come home, I'd go there. I'd make a little pudding for him. I used to go there and keep him company, talk to him, like that. Ever since then, I don't know, she took a liking to me. She almost went insane, too, when she lost that boy. That was her youngest boy. So, I used to go there, talk to her and tell her that she had to take what God gave her. I says, "Look with me. I lost my two girls. I lost my brother, my nephew. All on the same day." I says, "But, I got to make the best of it." So then, she used to go to church and I used to go to church. So when she used to come, her husband was still working. I used to call her and I used to tell her, "Come. Come inside. Let's go have coffee. You and I." So, she used to come and we used to have coffee and all that. So, her sister's a hairdresser. When the sister sees me, she says, "You know, my sister thinks the world of you."

MK: You must have helped her a lot . . .

GO: Yes. She says, "You don't know what you did to her when she was feeling so bad, and the way you used to cheer her up."

"Well," I says, "I went through it and I know just the way . . ."

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: As we kind of come to the close of our interview, I want to ask you, what are your feelings about Kalihi and your life here in the valley?

GO: Oh, I enjoyed it very much. I'd never change it. (Laughs)

MK: Why is that?

GO: I don't know. I like it so much. This was the first home that I bought. You know, my own. I wouldn't part with it, unless when God wants to take me, then I have to part (chuckles), but otherwise, I'll go for a trip and all of that, but I'll always come back home.

MK: What are your own feelings about your own life, growing up here . . .

GO: Oh, I had a good life. Very good. My young days was good. As I say,



people now, I don't know, they don't feel towards one another like before. Like when I was brought up, good friends. Everybody was friendly. You know, you'd share things with one another. And I still do. (Chuckles) I just took yesterday--no, Tuesday, I went down to the home where my brother was. They were so nice to him, although he used to give them bad time. So, I baked a cake and I took to them. Took two little loaves for the day shift, and two for the night. Day shift and the night shift. So, when I got there, the head nurse told me, "Oh, it's so good to see you."

I says, "Yes, good to see you folks, too." But I had been there already after my brother died. And I said, "Well, I brought something for the girls." "Well," I says, "You can have a slice, too." (Chuckles) I told her.

She says, "Oh, my goodness. You didn't have to do that."

I says, "But I wanted to." I said, "Because they were nice to my brother." Then, I went up to see the patients. And when two of them saw me, oh, you should have seen them calling me to hug me and kiss me. They were so cute. But there was a little Japanese one. Too bad, she passed away. Every time the elevator would go up, she'd look to see if I was coming. When she would see me, oh, the big smile on her face. I used to go and kiss her, pet her, and all the tears would come down. One day that I had gone and the niece was there. She says, "You know, my grandma thinks the world of you. She says you're her good friend." (Chuckles) But there was one. Oh, I had the biggest kick with that one. She was cranky. Her grandson told me she's very cranky. So, I used to tell, "How are you, Ma? How you?" And she would this way. Put the tongue out. Oh, the nephew was there, and oh, he'd scold her. I says, "No, don't scold her." I says, "She's sick."

He says, "But she's not supposed to do that."

So, anyway, every time I'd go, I'd stop and pet her and all of that. Finally, she was nice when (chuckles) she used to see me. She used to smile and everything.

MK: So, it's more like the friendliness that you kind of miss . . .

GO: I guess so.

MK: . . . from the old days?

GO: That's why, I say, now, it's not like before. Although my family up through here, we all united. As they say, stick like bread and jelly. (Laughs) But no, I wouldn't part from. . . . I wouldn't. Like some salesmen, they come here. They says, "You know, you have a big house and it's easy to sell it."

I says, "Thank you." I says, "Why I'm going to sell this when I

can't buy another one." (Laughs) Once you so used to with a place, you don't want to move.

MK: You like your life here. I'm going to end the interview.

GO: Mm hmm.

END OF INTERVIEW

**KALIHI:**  
**Place of Transition**

**Vol. I**

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL  
HISTORY PROJECT**

**Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawaii at Manoa**

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